

Conference Connection is the monthly eNewsletter of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ. You're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in the work of the Southeast Conference. Don't forget to add clwaldron@secucc.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

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Annual Winter Youth Retreat was a Blast!



150 youth from 16 churches in both the Southeast and Southern Conferences of the UCC descended on Blowing Rock Conference Center over MLK weekend for the annual Winter Youth Retreat.

It was a packed weekend full of music, laughter, fellowship, skiing, and service projects. The band, Lost and Found, a dynamic, fast paced musical duo that has been playing youth conferences for over 25 years, led our morning and evening worship sessions.

The theme of the weekend was "Tell your story" and each time we gathered together as a group for worship and programming we were given various chances to tell our stories to one another. In Luke's Gospel, Christ tells the disciples to go and tell what they have seen and heard...When we feel encouraged to tell how and when God has been active in our lives we quickly find out that the barriers that separate us as individuals fall away. We tell our stories and glimpse pieces of our own journeys when we hear other's stories.

I am convinced that by investing in our youth we are investing in the future of the church. By empowering them to speak out, by exposing them to progressive theology, and by giving them a community in which asking questions is encouraged we are providing the framework for a faith that can stay with them through the trails and challenges of life.

The Winter Youth Retreat is something our Conference can be proud of and something we should brag about. The long weekend was an affirmation of unity and progress. As I looked out across the glowing red mountains of North Carolina, I was reminded of the energy and vision of a wider church body that feels committed to the work of United Church of Christ. That they may all be one- certainly manifested itself in our common gathering.

Please join our Facebook group "UCC Winter Youth Retreat" for updates and information about how you can join us next year on January 15-18, 2016.

Rev. Lacey Brown

Jottings from June

Glory be to the One whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

We will begin the season of Lent this month with Ash Wednesday on February 18. Lent is perhaps the most meaningful part of the church calendar for me. It is a time when we are encouraged to be reflective and to consider deeply what is at the foundation of our faith and values as a human being and a follower of Christ. I am always deeply moved by the fully human one who is sent to us from God to assume all the joys and sorrows of the human condition.

As I reflect on Unexpected Places, the theme of General Synod (the biennial national meeting of the UCC) for 2015, and as I consider the changes in my life with the loss of my mother and other significant family situations, I suspect that my Lenten reflections will be on those unexpected places when God showed up in my life. As a minister whose primary vocation has been as an interim, there is no hesitancy about entering those unfamiliar and new places and situations. There is actually a part of me that relishes the new and is excited about the undiscovered things to be revealed in new relationships and locations and challenges. But would I be so excited if I knew the cost of this kind of discipleship in detail if it meant that I would have to give my life for my faith.

What does it mean for my life and my ministry when I find myself at the foot of the cross or standing at the entrance of the empty tomb? What does it mean for my life and my ministry when I pray and seek to find a way to respond to the human violence and suffering in the world? What does it mean for my life and my ministry when I am asked to step into a new place to witness to another person or to a struggling community what hope and renewal and life lived fully might look like?

I hope that during this reflective season you will be blessed with the vision to see the places where God has shown up in your life, in the life of your church, in the life of the community around you. Each of us will experience grace in our own way. May that experience lead to reflection, prayer, joy, and even a tear or two as we walk this faithful road seeking the Christ to be revealed to us unawares in the midst of our daily comings and goings.

Blessings, June





We are beginning a process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2015. Each month, we will publish a weekly list for the month and post them weekly on our Facebook page. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

[Click here to download the February and March prayer lists](#)

[Click here to download the list for all of 2015](#)

Rev. Nayiri Karjian as she completed her interim ministry at Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC on January 25th.

Rev. Dorothea Lotze-Kola was installed as part-time pastor for the Die Deutsche Kirchengemeinde in Atlanta (the German Church in Atlanta), an Evangelical Lutheran Church in American congregation, on February 8.

Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC in Pleasant Hill, Tennessee and Rev. Glenna Shepherd who begins her ministry there on February 15.

Covenant Community Church UCC and Pastor JR Finney as they celebrate their 34th anniversary on February 15.

Rev. Laurie Hill, Fairfield Glade Community Church, Fairfield Glade, Tennessee, will be installed on March 8.

Rev. Rick Diekmann has announced his resignation from Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee. He will serve through Easter Sunday.

Churches in transition- Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery Alabama; Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Pilgrim UCC, Birmingham Alabama; Church of the Savior, Alpharetta Georgia; United Church, Cookeville Tennessee; Decatur UCC, Decatur Georgia; Peace Congregational UCC, Clemson South Carolina; Pensacola UCC, Pensacola Florida; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga Tennessee.

PATHWAYS in Progress: Launching a New Cohort



Rochelle is a lay leader at Pilgrim UCC in Marietta, GA. Rich is an entrepreneur and a local UCC church member in Larchwood, Iowa. Kim is a clinical social worker living in Knoxville, TN. Amber pastors a UCC congregation in Flowood, Mississippi. Ceil is a lay leader at Church of Savior UCC in Knoxville, TN, who hopes retire as a certified chaplain. They come from all locales, but have at least one thing in common: they are aspiring learners in theology/ministerial training who have just begun a new journey in the PATHWAYS Level 2 program.

The Level 2 program is a 15-month long program designed to equip learners for licensed ministry in the United Church of Christ. The curriculum's emphasis is on the practical side of being a minister with courses on Biblical studies, preaching, boundary training, UCC history & polity, and the hands-on supervised ministry practicum. The five cohort members are veteran learners of PATHWAYS who have all done well in the Level 1 program; they each bring exceptional gift and talent that will enrich the cohorts learning experience.

For more info on PATHWAYS, visit www.tasc21.net.

Rev. Sarah Kim

Generosity Corner



Transforming Churches • Transforming Lives
SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

NEW YEAR - NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Exciting happenings for Southeast Conference churches.... Grant applications are now being accepted for grants up to \$5,000.00. Awarded grants will support the original initiatives of the Transforming Churches - Transforming Lives Capital Campaign. The initiatives and all information about how to apply can be found at www.seucc.org, and clicking on the Green Application Link.

Application submission deadline is March 15, 2015, so you still have plenty of time. This is the first granting cycle for 2015. Next application cycle begins October 1, 2015.

For churches and individuals who still are paying on their Capital Campaign pledges, thank you for sending in your timely payments. Pledges are still being paid over the next 3 years, till 2017.

Our Church's Wider Mission Giving

2014 OCWM Giving by churches was \$229,000. The Conference and Board of Directors are thankful for each of our churches giving to OCWM. Locally, your OCWM dollars have been supporting an abundance of Conference work. In the chart below, you will see that giving is down from last year as well as behind our estimate of giving for the year. Encouragement is given to every church in 2015, to use a quarterly payment schedule to ensure cash flow year-round.



Please mark your calendar with the following events!

2015

February 21 *Commission on Ministry, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, TN*

Healthy Boundaries Fundamentals, First Christian Church of Atlanta, Tucker, GA

March 6-7 **PATHWAYS**
Facilitator/Advisory Committee Retreat, Bufford, GA

April 18 *MID Committee, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, TN*

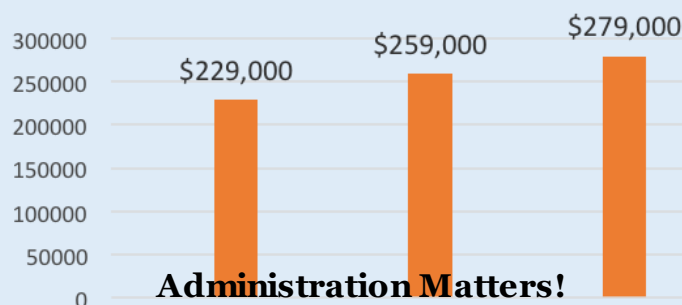
April 21 *SEC Board Meeting, Online*

June 11-13 *Pre-event and Southeast Conference Annual Meeting, Piedmont College, Demorest GA*

June 26-30 *General Synod in Cleveland, OH*

August 8 *Commission on Ministry, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, TN*

OCWM GIVING for 2014



Administration Matters!

It's time again for reporting of Yearbook statistics for the past year. The UCC Data Hub is open and ready for your submission. This year and going forward churches are responsible for inputting their information.

Debbie Spearman, Generosity Coordinator

The national office has provided an instruction booklet (Data Hub - Church User's Guide) that explains each tab within the database entry area. [You can get that document by clicking here.](#)

Before entering data at each tab, read the instructions because there are a few pointers that you will want to know

prior

to data entry. The instructions will walk you through the actual entry steps. There are Online Data Entry Forms attached to the last pages (pages 5-6) of the instruction booklet that could be used as a worksheet for your raw data.

To work along with the entry form worksheets is a "Tip Sheet" that explains each field that you will actually see on the data base.

The "Tip Sheet" as well as tutorial videos are available [by clicking here.](#)

Be sure to have your instruction booklet (Data Hub - Church User's Guide) available before you start to enter your data. The magical "Add or Submit" buttons means that the data has been entered and you will not be able to change it. If you save incorrect information, please contact Gerri Hudson so that the information can be changed by the national office.

Please do not contact the national office which questions or issues related to the data hub. Instead contact Gerri Hudson at 404-607-1993 ext. 0 or ghudson@secucc.org and she will be able to help you with your issues.

Please send an email to the Conference office at Gerri Hudson when you have completed your data entry.

Remember, data entry must be completed by March 9, 2015 in order to be listed in the 2015 Yearbook.

Thank you all for the work that you do in providing the national office with this important information.

October 5-7 Retired Servants Retreat,
Blowing Rock Conference Center, NC

October 16-18 Southern Regional Women's Conference,
Sumatanga Retreat Center, Gallant, AL

2016

July 26-29 National Youth Event
Orlando, FL

Getting To Know You

Will you help us get to know you better?

Most churches have held their annual meetings by now. It would be a great help to the ministry of the Southeast Conference UCC if each church would send a copy of their annual reports and budget to the Conference office either by email attachment or by postal mail.

This is an information request only

so that the Conference Minister and Board of Directors can have a clearer picture of your ministries and leadership to serve you better as we launch a Board Ambassadors program and as the Conference Minister supports and visits with churches in this Conference.

Invitation to the Installation of Rev. Laurie Hill

You are cordially invited to attend the installation of Rev. Laurie Hill as pastor of Fairfield Glade Community Church. Her Installation is on Sunday, March 8, 2015 at 3:00 p.m.

(central time) with dinner reception to follow.

[You can print an invitation by clicking here.](#)

Upcoming Training Opportunities

Boundary Awareness Training

Looking for training on boundaries? The UCC and DOC are partnering to offer a class in

"Our Whole Lives" Facilitator Training

Looking to become an OWL facilitator for your congregation? OWL is a comprehensive sex education course for different ages from young children to adult developed by the UCC and the UUA. High Country UCC in Vilas, NC is hosting training in April. [Click here for more information.](#)

Tools for Building an Inclusive Church

MARCH FOR LITERACY

Participate in service with other UCC congregations with March Forth for

Literacy!

The UCC is urging congregations to promote literacy through the Reading Changes Lives initiative, which began this past fall with "Project One Read". In this ongoing effort, the national UCC is encouraging members to take action next month by collecting books, volunteering, advocating and donating in a one-day, church-wide effort- March Forth for Literacy- on March 4. Looking for more information for participating in this national hands-on service movement? [Click here!](#) Have some stories to share about work that you're doing around literacy? [Let us know!](#)

Dorothea Lotze-Kola Installation

Dorothea Lotze-Kola was installed as pastor at Die Deutsche Kirchengemeinde in Atlanta, a German speaking Evangelical Lutheran Congregation on February 8 as a full communion partner minister. Please join us in extending congratulations and prayers for the new journey!



In the picture (from left to right): Esther Djopke-Hinrichs; President of Church Council; Rev. Michelle Angalet, ELCA; Rev. June Boutwell, UCC, and Dorothea Lotze-Kola (front).



Looking for a program for your congregation during Lent? The Massachusetts Conference of the UCC and NEREM (New England Regional Environmental Ministries) are partnering up to offer a Lenten Carbon Fast. This program gives you resources for discussing carbon use and the environment in your congregation, and has a daily devotional that you can sign up for. [Click here for more information on the SECUCC webpage.](#)



On February 21 Openings, in Columbia South Carolina, is offering a workshop on building an inclusive church facilitated by Helen Ryde, the Southeastern Regional Organizer for the Reconciling Ministries Network. You can get more information on the [Openings website by clicking here](#)

Rediscovering The Joy Of Play

UCC Office Support Staff Network 2015 Annual Conference

To all office support staff:

Plymouth Congregational Church of Ft. Wayne, Indiana and the Indiana- Kentucky Conference of the UCC are hosting "Rediscovering The Joy Of Play" at the 2015 Annual Conference of the United Church of Christ Office Support Staff Network (UCCOSSN). This year's annual conference, taking place April 9-11, is being held in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

[More information can be found by clicking here.](#)



UCC RESOURCES

BOOKS ✓ STILL SPEAKING ✓ BIBLES ✓ MUSIC ✓
CHURCH ESSENTIALS ✓ FAITH FORMATION ✓

UCC Resources has materials available for Lent, including a new devotional from the Stillspeaking writers group. You can get your hands on "Re-Lent" the 2015 daily Lenten devotional by [clicking here](#).

It's also time to order VBS and camp resources! [You can find recommended VBS materials here.](#)



Forward this issue

Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

Retired UCC Servants Retreat

October 5-7, 2015

The Fifth Annual UCC Retired Servants event will be held at Blowing Rock Conference Center Monday-Wednesday, October 5-7, 2015. This event is especially for retired UCC clergy and spouses, retired UCC missionaries and spouses, and for those who have been or are active volunteers in the UCC Partners in Service program who are part of the Southeast Conference and Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ. More details will follow. Reservations are made through Blowing Rock Conference Center.



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